

■ **If my employee doesn't sign a release allowing me to learn about their participation in the EAP, how likely will he or she be to accept the help offered by the Employee Assistance Program?**

Employees formally referred to the EAP by supervisors may have a motivational advantage over their self-referred peers to sign a release. The reason is simple. An employee who knows management is aware of their participation and cooperation with the EAP, even though details aren't disclosed, can possess a greater sense of urgency to follow through with treatment recommendations. This increases the likelihood of success with treatment or counseling goals. This unique dynamic of the EAP process can help motivate employees to follow through and can successfully treat even the most difficult personal problems. However, don't underestimate the supervisor's role and the influence of diligent follow up. Staying focused on performance and insisting on change often makes all the difference.

■ **Our agency has many National Guard troops who have returned from overseas. How lenient should supervisors be with these employees? Don't they deserve a break because of their stress and leniency when performance problems arise?**

It is natural to weigh the circumstances of your employees and be lenient as a way of accommodating them. However, unless a specific request is made for a reasonable accommodation, it is generally better to treat employees equally and all as fully capable. Don't assume these employees require different standards for how their performance should be judged. Many employees experience performance problems attributable to traumas and personal issues. Although the stress of war and its toll on the psyche is extraordinary, your employees will benefit most by being held to the same performance standards as other employees.

■ **My fellow managers and I have been educated in the signs and symptoms**

Knowing the signs, symptoms, and workplace impact of alcohol abuse is important. However, it's also important that you stay in control of a constructive confrontation with your employee by being on your guard against alcoholic manipulation and well-honed defense mechanisms. That will determine

■ **of alcohol abuse on the job, but isn't the most important part of training learning to avoid being manipulated and dispelling misconceptions about alcoholism?**

whether you are ultimately successful in making a supervisor referral or are willing to take action in response to problematic events. Employees affected by addictive diseases rely upon their relationships with others to remain in denial, and to continue believing that they are in control of their alcohol use. Consult with the EAP before meeting with your employee to discuss performance or conduct issues.

■ **I know EAPs can help employees return to satisfactory levels of job performance and that this helps the bottom line. But isn't it a stretch to say that EAPs help reduce costs associated with things such as litigation, injuries, or even damaged equipment?**

Employees affected by severe personal problems may experience a wide range of behavioral issues, many of which directly affect the bottom line. However, like an iceberg, other cost/benefits exist beneath the surface. Reduced turnover or absenteeism, for example, has secondary cost/benefits. The hiring of temporary workers or paying overtime to others to complete work assignments is avoided. When the EAP helps an employee who otherwise would have been terminated, the risk of litigation, legal expenses, paperwork, and lost management time is avoided. Almost any cost/benefit has multiple other cost/savings associated with it, and this makes an EAP a great investment.

■ **I have an employee who wants to bring her 8-year-old child to work because she does not feel the child is "safe" at home with an unemployed roommate. I said OK once, but the request has come up again. How can the EAP help? Should I ask why she doesn't trust the roommate?**

It is appropriate to ask why she feels the child is not safe at home because

she disclosed her concern and because the safety of the child is the paramount issue. Encourage your employee to contact the EAP to get help with this problem. Bring the issue to the attention of your manager so you aren't operating in isolation trying to address it. There could be a host of reasons why your employee doesn't want to leave the child at home, some of which may be a cause for alarm. The EAP will ask other personal questions necessary to discover the nature of the problem and try to discover what resources are needed to address the issue.

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